

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES AND THEIR HERITAGE

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When Europeans first came to North America, they learned a lot of things from Aboriginal peoples. And a lot of that knowledge is still being shared today.

First Nations and Inuit have lived in North America for thousands of years. Their ancestors had to be very resourceful to thrive in this territory with its varied landscape and its often harsh climate.

In the Arctic, where living conditions are severe and there are no trees, Inuit's ancestors used snow's insulating qualities to invent the igloo. They also perfected the kayak, a boat adapted to icy waters. For instance, if a kayak capsizes, the kayaker can quickly put the boat upright without getting out. Also, kayakers can easily thread their way through ice floes.

Eastern North America is covered with dense forest and a great many waterways. By inventing bark canoes, Aboriginal peoples of this region used these waterways to penetrate the forests!

Aboriginal peoples living in the Prairies were nomads who hunted buffalo, a migratory animal. They perfected a lightweight, solid dwelling that was easy to move from place to place: the teepee. This dwelling is made of poles arranged in a cone shape and covered with animal skins.

On the Pacific Coast, Aboriginal peoples built dams to catch fish. They lived in permanent villages and developed a tradition of sculpture.

Centuries of heritage

Over the centuries, Aboriginal peoples have acquired knowledge, invented technology and developed a way of life adapted to their specific environment. They have depended on nature for their survival and have had a special

relationship with it. For them, the Earth is sacred, something to be respected. In fact, they consider themselves a part of the Earth.

Aboriginal peoples transmitted a great deal of very useful knowledge to the first Europeans who arrived in North America (some time around 1500).

For example, Aboriginal peoples introduced Europeans to new plants. Some were used for food and others for medicine. Today, many of the items we find in our medicine cabinets come from traditional Aboriginal healing methods and remedies.

It would have taken Europeans much longer to establish themselves in North America without the contribution of Aboriginal peoples. And today, life would be very different!





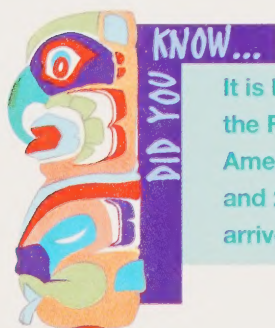
FIRST NATIONS, INUIT OR MÉTIS?

Over one million Aboriginal people live in Canada. The Canadian constitution recognizes three Aboriginal groups: First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. While these three groups have much in common, they are also very distinct. Within each group are different heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

First Nations is a term many Aboriginal peoples have chosen to call themselves. It replaces the term *Indian* which was used in the past. There are many First Nations in Canada. Have you heard of some of them? Here are a few: Mi'kmaq (Maritime provinces), Abenaki (Quebec), Ojibwa (Ontario), Saulteaux (Manitoba), Plains Cree (Saskatchewan), Blackfoot (Alberta), Nisga'a (British Columbia), Dene (Northwest Territories) and Gwich'in (Yukon).

Inuit are Aboriginal people who live above the treeline, in the Northwest Territories, in Northern Quebec and Labrador.

Métis people are descendants of both Aboriginal and European people and originally come from the Métis community of Western Canada. This group also includes people of Aboriginal descent who define themselves as Métis to distinguish themselves from the First Nations and Inuit.



It is believed that the ancestors of the First Nations arrived in North America sometime between 50,000 and 25,000 BC. Inuit's ancestors arrived about 15,000 years ago.



LACROSSE

Team Spirit: AN ABORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

The ancestors of today's Aboriginal peoples played hundreds of outdoor games, many of them in teams. In fact, before Europeans discovered North America, team sports were not very well known in Europe. Instead, Europeans preferred games that did not favour team spirit, like chess, fencing and archery. Popular sports invented by Aboriginal peoples include snowshoeing, dog-sledding, tobogganing, kayaking and canoeing. Lacrosse is another team sport invented by Aboriginal people. Some believe it is the forerunner to hockey.

LANGUAGE

Without realizing it, we use Aboriginal words, such as *moccasin*, *kayak* and *parka*. In Canada, hundreds of lakes, rivers, mountains, cities and villages have Aboriginal names. These place names often describe a particular characteristic of the area.

Do you know what the names of the following cities and provinces mean in Aboriginal languages? Match each word with its correct meaning.

1. Gaspé
2. Chicoutimi
3. Cacouna
4. Québec
5. Saskatchewan
6. Manitoba
7. Ontario
8. Yukon

- A. End of the deep water, in Montagnais
- B. Swift-flowing river, in Cree (Plains)
- C. End of extremity, in Mi'kmaq
- D. Porcupine country, in Cree
- E. Lake of the prairie, in Assiniboine
- F. Where the river narrows, in Mi'kmaq
- G. Great river, in Loucheux
- H. Beautiful, sparkling water, in Huron

KNOW...

The name of our country comes from the Huron word *Kanata*, which means "hamlet" or "village."



DO YOU LIKE POPCORN? PLAY TEAM SPORTS?
CANOE? FIVE HUNDRED YEARS AGO,
WHILE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES WERE ENJOYING
THESE THINGS, EUROPEANS HADN'T EVEN
HEARD OF THEM.



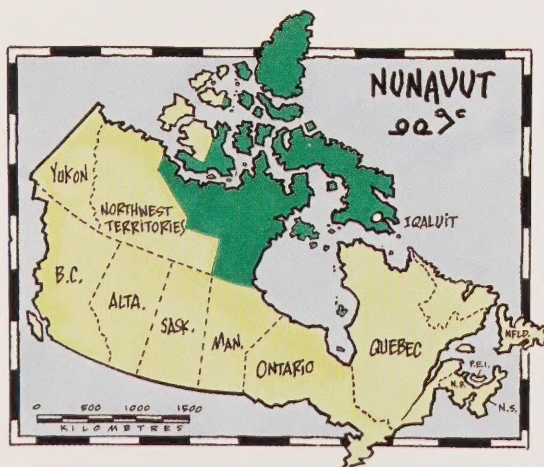
For more information on Aboriginal peoples, visit these Web sites :

• Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
<http://www.inac.gc.ca>

• Aboriginal Youth Network
<http://ayn.ca>

NUNAVUT

On April 1, 1999, the map of Canada will change. That's right! A new territory will be carved out of what is today the Northwest Territories. It will be called Nunavut. In Inuktitut, the Inuit language, this word means "Our Land." Nunavut will cover one fifth of Canada, and it will be home to



some 22,000 people, including 17,500 Inuit. It will have 28 villages or communities, including the capital, Iqaluit,

located on Baffin Island. That's where the territorial government will be. About 3600 people live in Iqaluit.

KNOW...

DID YOU

Corn is a plant that originates in America. To make popcorn, you have to heat the dried kernels until they pop. First Nations have known this recipe for a very long time. Their ancestors discovered it. Sometimes they dipped popcorn in maple syrup, the forerunner to caramel corn, also known as Cracker Jack™. Aboriginal peoples introduced Europeans to all kinds of food in addition to corn and maple syrup, like potatoes and onions.



ABORIGINAL YOUTH HAVE A TASTE FOR SCIENCE!

Since 1996, more and more Aboriginal youths have been participating in science, technology and engineering summer camps. These camps are organized in their community or by universities.

For five days at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, Inuit and First Nations youth explore science through all kinds of activities, such as identifying insects and building telegraphs and gliders.

At the University of Regina, in Saskatchewan, more than 40 Aboriginal students participate in field trips, on-campus workshops, sports and social gatherings. It gives them a good opportunity to learn about sciences and, especially, meet students from other communities.



CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

As one student at Concordia University, in Quebec, said: "I found out that engineering and sciences could be lots of fun!" Cultivating Aboriginal youth's taste for science may encourage them to go on to scientific careers.



During festivities, young Bradley Thomas displays the traditional clothing of his people, the Mohawk.

JUNE 21

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

Since 1996, Canada has celebrated **National Aboriginal Day** every summer. It takes place on **June 21**, the same day as the summer solstice. This day was chosen because for generations Aboriginal peoples have celebrated their culture and heritage around this time. It is an opportunity for all Canadians to learn more about Aboriginal cultures. To celebrate National

Aboriginal Day, why not organize an activity in your neighbourhood or with your friends? For example, read up about Aboriginal peoples, and then share what you've learned (on their history and culture) around a campfire. Or, organize a get-together along the theme of Aboriginal peoples and serve Aboriginal dishes (or foods adopted from them).

NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE OF MONTREAL

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